Maharlika

PINOY LIFE IN THE MARIANAS

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La Greta

After her row with Dawn Zulueta, Gretchen Barretto is in the headlines again because of her tiff with Lani Mercado. That's La Greta's style of welcoming 2007 with a bang.

Page 5

Kuha sa T'yaga

Since acting careers here are often launched on the basis of good looks alone, stars' early performances are wooden, awkward, embarrassing and amateurish—at the start.

Page 6

RP: Peace accord with Muslim rebels this year

Romulo

By EDITH M. LEDERER
AP WRITER

DAVOS, Switzerland (AP)—The Philippines government is confident it will sign a peace agreement this year with the largest Muslim rebel group which has waged a bloody insurgency for self-rule for more than two decades, Foreign Secretary Alberto Romulo said Thursday.

He expressed hope that an agreement with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front could be signed by June.

"We are confident that it will come to fruition this year," Romulo told a panel on "The Challenge to Moderate Islam in Southeast Asia" at the World Economic Forum in Davos.

The rebel group, known as the MILF, is the largest of at least four Muslim groups that have been fighting for self-rule in the impoverished Mindanao region in the southern Philippines. It is the homeland of Muslim Filipinos who constitute about 10 percent of the population.

The Philippine and U.S. governments hope that an agreement with the MILF—estimated by the military to have 13,000 members with 10,000 firearms—could transform its vast rural strongholds into economic

RP Page 2

Cory turns 74, says she was not ideal president

MANILA, Philippines (AP)—Former President Corazon Aquino, who restored democracy in the Philippines after leading a 1986 "people power" revolt, turned 74 on Thursday, saying she never considered herself an ideal leader.

"People used to compare me to the ideal president, but he doesn't exist and never existed. He has never lived," The *Philippine Star* daily quoted Aquino as saying.

Aquino, a former housewife, reluctantly took over as dictator Ferdinand

CORY Page 2

AP

Former Philippine President Corazon Aquino addresses supporters as she leads the commemoration of the 23rd anniversary of the assassination of her husband, Sen. Benigno "Ninoy" Aquino Jr., at a memorial park at suburban Paranaque south of Manila in this Monday Aug.21, 2006 photo.

FRANCO MENDOZA

Portrait of the pianist as a computer geek

By AGNES E. DONATO
REPORTER

Whoever said that art and science don't mix obviously has not heard of Leonardo Da Vinci—or at least met Saipan's own Franco Mendoza.

Originally from the Philippine city of Caloocan, this longtime island resident is a pianist, zoologist, and technology expert rolled into one. His hands can make the piano weep just as well as they can amaze with a computer keyboard.

Throughout his 20-year career, Mendoza has worked with computers. He started as a programmer-trainee for a small Philippine company and quickly rose the ranks to become its lead systems programmer. He worked with two other firms before he moved to Saipan to join Marianas Cable Vision in 1992, and later Coral Ocean Point Resort and Bank of Saipan.

PORTRAIT Page 2

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PINOYNEWS

Info Caravan to visit Kannat Tabla

By MARCONI CALINDAS
REPORTER

The Philippine Consulate General, in cooperation with the Philippine Overseas Labor Office and the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration, will visit the village of Kannat Tabla this Sunday for its Information Caravan.

Labor representative Joan Lourdes Lavilla said the caravan is a campaign to disseminate accurate information about the services of the Philippine Consulate Office in the CNMI and its sub-offices such as OWWA and their benefits.

She said the project is a yearlong program targeting villages and Filipino workers who couldn't find the time to visit the Philippine Consulate Office due to restrained time at their end.

She told Saipan Tribune yesterday that the Information Caravan was launched last Jan. 14 at the Sablan Compound in San Antonio. Consul General Wilfredo DL. Maximo and Consul Belinda Ante led the campaign's launching.

Lavilla said the launching was deemed successful due to the cooperation of the Filipino workers and families living in the area.

Lavilla said the questions raised during the first Sunday Information Caravan were mostly about marriages of Filipino couples and dual citizenships of Filipino children born and raised in the Commonwealth, among many other concerns and issues.

The campaign this Sunday will be in collaboration with the OWWA- OFW Support Group. Consulate officials will lead the Information Caravan. The next area that the group will visit will be the CMS Compound in Gualo Rai.

The campaign is part of extra efforts to increase awareness among overseas Filipino workers in the CNMI about their rights and privileges such as maintaining their OWWA membership status. The caravan will visit villages around the CNMI and talk to Filipino workers and some of their employers.

OWWA welfare officer Leonor Mabagal earlier said they wanted to undertake this project due to some incidents where some Filipino workers are involved in accidents or get sick but they couldn't be officially helped by OWWA because they are no longer members, or they did not renew their membership.

In the CNMI, more than 80 percent of Filipino nonresident workers are active OWWA members but there are reportedly still some who have opted out or have neglected renewing their membership in the OWWA program despite the benefits they could get.

"There are several benefits that they can get by renewing their membership with us [OWWA]," OWWA said, including insurance benefits if they get involved in an accident while on the job.

In April 2006, a Filipino contract worker was killed at a drainage construction site after being pinned by a car on Beach Road in Chalan Kanoa. He was not a member of OWWA, resulting in his family being unable to avail of at least $4,000 in insurance benefits apart from what he was suppose to get from his employer.

RP

FROM PAGE 1

growth hubs instead of battlefields breeding al-Qaida-linked militants.

A massive U.S.-backed offensive that started Aug. 1 on southern Jolo island has been targeting Abu Sayyaf extremist rebels who have ties to the al-Qaida-linked Southeast Asian terror network Jemaah Islamiyah.

Romulo said radical Islam in southeast Asia would get stronger "if you don't do anything about it."

"But the fact is in southeast Asia ... we are doing a lot about it, and so I think it has weakened," he said.

Fellow panelists Anwar Zainah, executive director of the Malaysian women's rights group Sisters in Islam, and Imam Feisal Abdul Rauf, founder of the Cordoba Initiative, an interfaith effort to improve relations between Americans and Muslims, agreed.

"Last year I would say stronger, but this year I would say weaker," Zainah said. "You have to challenge them—and you have to take them on publicly. That's very important."

Rauf said as a result of widespread action to counter radical Islam, "in the Philippines, for instance, and other parts of southeast Asia I think it's a lot weaker."

The Philippines, the only overwhelmingly Christian country in Asia aside from East Timor, signed a peace agreement in 1996 with the biggest Muslim separatist group in the south, the Moro National Liberation Front, with the help of Indonesia.

Basic Sewing, Basic English courses still open

By MARCONI CALINDAS
REPORTER

The Philippine Overseas Labor Office at the Philippine Consulate General is still accepting applicants for two of its five free Skills Enhancement Training for overseas Filipino workers in the CNMI.

According to CNMI POLO, the Basic Sewing and Basic English courses are still accepting more students. However, the courses for Culinary Arts, Basic Computer Operation, and Basic Nihonggo have been completely filled up. POLO said the office is still accepting applications for the next batch of free courses.

POLO will be starting with two basic courses: Culinary Arts and Basic English Language. The Culinary Arts training course will start on Feb. 3 and will run until March 3, every Saturday from 2pm to 6pm. The Basic English Language will be from Feb. 4 to April 8. The course is going to be held every Sunday from 8pm to 11am.

For the third time, Hermie Coronejo, a culinary arts expert from the Fiesta Resort & Spa Saipan, would be lending his expertise to share some culinary tips and information to students.

Long-time partner of POLO, the University of the Philippines Alumni Association, will handle the Basic English Language course. UPAA member Fe Calixterio will spearhead the Basic English Language class.

Other courses that POLO will be opening for registration will include Basic Sewing.

The classes are on a first-come first-serve basis, said POLO. Only 30 OFWs per course will be allowed to join the free classes each training period.

The classes will be held at the POLO-Filipino Workers Resource Center at the Marianas Business Plaza, formerly known as the Nauru Building. The training is in collaboration with the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration.

For more information on these courses, contact OWWA welfare officer Leonor Mabagal or administrative staff Eric Medio at 235-6992.

CORY

FROM PAGE 1

Marcos' main challenger after her husband, opposition leader Benigno "Ninoy" Aquino Jr., was gunned down at Manila airport upon returning from exile in 1983.

Three years later, hundreds of thousands of demonstrators, accusing Marcos of cheating in the 1986 election, swept Aquino to power in a peaceful protest that became a harbinger of change in authoritarian regimes worldwide.

Marcos fled the country and died in Hawaii in 1989. Aquino held office until 1992.

"During Ninoy's incarceration and before my presidency, I used to ask why it had always to be us to make the sacrifice," The *Star* quoted Aquino as saying. "And then, when Ninoy died, I would say, why does it have to be me now? It seemed like we were always the sacrificial lamb."

Aquino again became active in 2001, throwing her support behind current President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo, who was swept to power in the country's second "people power" revolt that toppled Joseph Estrada.

However, Aquino later took on Arroyo, joining opposition figures in calling for her resignation over allegations of vote-rigging in the 2004 elections.

Aquino also assailed the Arroyo administration's attempt to change the constitution to switch from the current U.S.-style presidential system of government to a parliamentary one.

PORTRAIT

FROM PAGE 1

His current position with Pacific Telecom Inc. (formerly Verizon Pacifica) is the longest he has held. Mendoza has served as system administrator and webmaster for the telecommunications firm since August 1998.

It is a tough job, but he enjoys it, Mendoza says.

Interestingly, Mendoza could be making a living out of anything but computers had he taken the predictable step and pursued a career in any of the college degrees he has obtained.

Not only does Mendoza has a bachelor's degree in music, but he has also finished a degree in zoology with the highest honors—summa cum laude—at the University of the Philippines.

How he got into computers? Well, an information technology book got him curious one day. Not one to take a challenge lightly, he used his student savings to buy a computer on installment and learned its inner workings by himself. His determination—and the little help he got from his purchases from Manila's used-books capital, Recto—certainly got him a long way.

By no means, however, that Mendoza has forgotten the passion for classical music that he began cultivating at age 5.

To this day, he plays the piano regularly. For at least two hours a day, his Dandan residence echoes with the melodies of Mendoza's all-time favorites, Bach and Chopin, as well as of the tunes of Ravel and Rachmaninoff, which he is only starting to master.

As the official pianist for the Shepherds Choir, Mendoza also plays regularly in Mount Carmel Cathedral.

But his most memorable public performance happened years back, when he unwittingly played for then President Bill Clinton while serving as a guest pianist at a recital at the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C. Mendoza had a chance to meet the U.S. president, who praised him for the "great job" he had done. (Mendoza has proof of this meeting on his website www.mendoza.cc.)

POLO warns vs deployment to Nigeria

RP govt also monitors deployment in Lebanon

By MARCONI CALINDAS
REPORTER

The Philippine Overseas Labor Office in the CNMI has received an advisory from the Department of Labor and Employment about the prohibition against deploying Filipino workers to Nigeria.

Labor attaché Joan Lourdes Lavilla said the DOLE secretary is asking the Filipino community in all host countries for OFWs to be informed about the current restrictions for Nigeria. She said the Filipino community in the CNMI should heed this request for their families' and loved ones' welfare.

DOLE Secretary Arturo D. Brion said the advisory released this week was in light of repeated incidents of kidnapping of Filipino workers due to the political situation in Nigeria.

"In order to ensure the continued security and safety of our OFWs, the temporary suspension of contract processing and deployment of Nigeria-bound workers is hereby ordered," Brion said, referring to Section 5 of Republic Act 8042.

Brion said the suspension applies to the processing and deployment of all land-based and sea-based Filipino workers. Manning and recruitment agencies have been directed to advise their principals of the Philippines' concern to prevent the occurrence of similar incidents.

In related news, DOLE said the government is closely monitoring the situation of overseas Filipino workers in Lebanon following a series of violence between the U.S.-backed government and Hezbollah-led protesters.

Brion reiterated that there is still ban on the deployment of OFWs to Lebanon, and asked that the public heed the government's warning.

DOLE said OWWA Deputy Administrator Angelo Jimenez, who is currently in Lebanon to check on the conditions of the OFWs, reported that the situation is generally peaceful, although there are isolated, small incidents of violence. However, the airport remains closed.

800,000 high-end jobs abroad available in next three years

By MARCONI CALINDAS
REPORTER

Despite the over one million Filipino workers deployed in 2006 to190 host countries and economies around the world, there are still 800,000 more jobs available in the next three years for OFWs.

The Department of Labor and Employment clarified, though, that these jobs are high-end ones requiring professionals and those with highly technical skills.

Labor and Employment Secretary Arturo D. Brion said Filipino workers could take advantage of the labor market for high-end jobs abroad if they are equipped with the necessary skills. He asked workers to enhance their skills and competitive advantage to sustain the global preference for Filipino workers.

He said the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority in the Philippines is set to intensify its human resources development and skills training programs to train and upgrade the workers for high-end and better paying jobs, not only locally but also overseas.

TESDA's efforts is part of its maximization of Filipino workers' capabilities and advantage to get employment that provides better pay and better benefits in host countries worldwide.

He said that DOLE is targeting to surpass last year's first time record of 1.083 million OFWs deployed, especially in terms of high-end employment.

DOLE said that based on the recent command conference of labor attaches held in Manila, the high-end jobs are in the fields of information technology, telecommunications, medical, tourism, oil and gas, maritime, and construction sectors in the Middle East, Asia, Europe, and the Americas.

Brion said the Philippine Overseas Labor Offices in countries where high-end jobs are expected to be in demand have begun to strategize in a bid to corner a large portion of the demand for OFWs.

LABOR FRONT

Filing a frivolous complaint

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
REPORTER

Q: What will happen to an alien worker who is found by the Department of Labor to have filed a complaint without merit and frivolous?

A: To discourage the filing of frivolous complaints, Labor seeks strict penalties against nonresident workers who file complaints that lack any factual basis whatsoever; who never complained of their employer over many months or years; who disregarded the employer's internal grievance procedures; and or whose filing of labor claims is designed simply to obtain transfer or temporary work authorization status.

In a previous ruling, Labor administrative hearing officer Jerry Cody had determined that the allegations of a worker were unfounded in fact or law. As a sanction, Cody barred and disqualified the worker from working in the CNMI as a nonresident worker for a period of four years. He ordered the complainant to pay the attorney's fees incurred by the employer in defending the action. The hearing officer denied the worker transfer relief and directed her to depart the CNMI voluntarily.

■ ■ ■

Q: What constitutes a frivolous case?

A: Cody, in a previous administrative order, pointed out that neither the Nonresident Workers Act nor a section in the Labor Code provides any guideline as to what constitutes a "frivolous" case.

In deciding the issue, Cody adopted the definition of a "frivolous" case as a "pleading that is not well grounded in fact or warranted by law;" or one that is filed for an "improper purpose."

■ ■ ■

Q: What will happen to a nonresident worker who is found by the Department of Labor to have participated in a scheme to obtain work authorization by fraudulent means?

A: Labor sanctions alien worker who participates in a scheme to obtain work authorization by fraudulent means with disbarment from working in the CNMI as a nonresident worker for a period of five years. Labor will also revoke all the papers issued to such worker.

In a previous ruling, Labor administrative hearing officer Maya B. Kara slapped a worker found to be in similar situation with all these sanctions. In addition, Kara required the worker to depart the CNMI within 20 days.

Kara pointed out that the "fraudulent basis for obtaining temporary work authorization is the functional equivalent of a frivolous complaint."

Submit questions on labor issues to *Saipan Tribune* via e-mail at editor@saipantribune.com, or by calling 235-6397, 235-2440, or 235-8747 and leaving a message at Ext. 133 or 135. You may also submit questions in person by writing it down and dropping it off at the *Saipan Tribune*'s office on the second floor of the CIC Centre on Beach Road, Garapan.

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ADB backs project to save RP threatened marine life

MANILA, Philippines (AP)—With less than 5 percent of coral reefs in the Philippines left untouched, the Asian Development Bank has stepped in with a US$42.8 million loan to help fishermen and officials better manage the ecosystem ravaged by overfishing.

The six-year project will provide extra incomes for fishermen and their families through small-business enterprises and addressing their social needs in a bid to reduce overfishing, fishing with dynamite or cyanide, and land conversion along the coast, the Manila-based lender said Thursday.

The Philippine archipelago is the 11th largest fish producer in the world and the fishing industry employs 5 percent of the labor force. But the ADB says the resources are declining and biodiversity is under threat from encroaching human activities.

Of the 25,000 square kilometers (9,652 square miles) of coral reefs, less than 5 percent are still in excellent condition. Mangrove forests are declining at a rate of 2,000 hectares (4,942 acres) per year, ADB said.

Fisheries production has been declining, with an average reef fish catch per unit at less than 2 kilograms per day, down from as much as 20 kg per day 30 years ago, it said.

The project will cover six priority marine biodiversity corridors and ecosystems in the provinces of Cagayan, Cebu, Davao Oriental, Masbate, Siquijor, and Zambales, where almost eight out of 10 people are living below the poverty line.

Top Indon terror suspect wounded

MANILA, Philippines (AP)—A top Indonesian terror suspect with a US$10 million bounty on his head was wounded in an army commando raid on a southern Philippine island last week, an army official said Thursday.

Dulmatin, wanted for allegedly helping to plot the 2002 bombings that killed 202 people on the Indonesian resort island of Bali, was hit by gunfire when army special forces attacked al-Qaida-linked rebels last week on Jolo island, army 1st Lt. Almirante Mijares said.

Mijares said he led the attack on the Abu Sayyaf camp, which housed about 60 guerrillas, after receiving an intelligence tip that Dulmatin, who uses one name like many Indonesians, and other wanted rebels were hiding in the forested area.

A Filipino guerrilla leader of the Abu Sayyaf rebel group, Abu Sulaiman, was killed during the Jan. 16 raid on Bud Daho mountain near Jolo's coastal town of Patikul.

"Dulmatin was also hit in that clash," Mijares said at a news conference where he and other army officers recounted details of the daytime assault. He did not elaborate.

"After the gunbattle, we only recovered the body of Abu Sulaiman," he said.

Sulaiman was believed to have been designated the new chief of Abu Sayyaf following the death of its previous head, Khadaffy Janjalani, in a September clash.

Washington has offered a US$10 million reward for the capture or killing of Dulmatin.

Mijares said he and his men managed to get close to the fog-shrouded Abu Sayyaf encampment in the wilderness and then saw a militant, who turned out to be Sulaiman, walking toward the fringes to relieve himself in the bushes. His two bodyguards were watching close by.

A soldier pointed his M-14 rifle at Sulaiman and ordered him to keep quiet, but the militant shouted "Allahu akbar," or "God is great," apparently to warn his comrades of the raid. The soldier shot and killed him, and the gunfire set off the clash, Mijares said.

After more than an hour of fighting, most of the guerrillas fled, he said.

The killings of Sulaiman and Janjalani were a major victory for the Philippine military after years of frustrated U.S.-backed operations to find the two. The duo have been accused of plotting major terror attacks, including a 2004 bomb that ignited a fire aboard a ferry near Manila Bay, killing 116 people in one of the worst terror strikes in Southeast Asia.

AP

In this photo released by the Presidential Close-in Photographer's Office, PCPO, Malacanang Palace in Manila Thursday Jan. 25, 2007, Philippine President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo, center, poses with Philippine Marines who fought and killed leaders of Muslim extremist Abu Sayyaf group during dinner and awarding ceremony at Malacanang Palace in Manila Wednesday Jan. 24, 2007.

'Overconfidence killed terror suspect'

MANILA, Philippines (AP)—A top terror suspect slain last week by army special forces met his violent end partly because of overconfidence, living in a beautiful camp with huts decorated by ornamental plants as 7,000 soldiers hunted him, a military official said.

Instead of continuing to flee from a massive U.S.-backed offensive, Abu Sayyaf leader Jainal Antel Sali Jr. apparently stayed for as long as three months in the rebel camp on southern Jolo island where troops found and killed him on Jan. 16.

"We found him in a small paradise at the foot of a mountain," said 1st Lt. Almirante Mijares, the commander of a 60-strong army special forces contingent that found Sali, who used the name Abu Sulaiman.

"They really had a beautiful camp," he said Thursday.

The Abu Sayyaf "VIPs" stayed in a camp with 17 wooden and bamboo huts, some of which had flower-lined pathways leading to their doors. Some huts had two beds, improvised toilets for women and lounge chairs. Nearby, lower-ranked insurgents stayed in a smaller encampment with 27 huts to guard the main camp, he said.

Acting on a tip, Mijares maneuvered his men close to the Abu Sayyaf camp, unknowingly stumbling on an unarmed Sulaiman as he was walking into the thick bushes to relieve himself.

A soldier pointed his M-14 rifle at Sulaiman and ordered him to keep quiet, but he attempted to run away while yelling "Allahu Akbar," or "God is great," apparently to warn his comrades. The soldier shot and killed Sulaiman, sparking a gunbattle, Mijares said.

"They did not have enough security. He was very confident," Mijares said.

PHILIPPINE BRIEFS

Honasan, Trillanes OK'd to register as candidates

MANILA, Philippines (AP)—A Philippine court ruled Thursday that two alleged coup plotters can leave their jail cells to register as candidates in senatorial elections in May. The Makati Regional Trial Court granted requests by former Sen. Gregorio Honasan and Navy Lt. Senior Grade Antonio Trillanes to be allowed to leave detention to personally file their certificates of candidacy at the elections commission office. Honasan, 58, was arrested in November after nine months on the run and is being held under tight security in a police training camp near Manila. He has been indicted on charges of leading a mutiny by about 300 junior officers who briefly occupied a ritzy apartment-hotel and mall complex in Makati, Manila's financial district, in July 2003. He also faces charges in a failed coup last February which prompted President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo to declare a weeklong state of emergency. Trillanes was among the young officers who led the short-lived mutiny in 2003. Both plan to run as independents for the Senate.

Suspected Taiwanese drug trafficker arrested

MANILA, Philippines (AP)—Police have arrested a Taiwanese drug trafficker who continued his illegal business in the southern Philippines after jumping bail in Taiwan two years ago, an official said Thursday. Tsai Wen-huang, 24, of Kaoshiung, Taiwan, was arrested in Koronadal city in South Cotabato province on Tuesday at the request of the National Police Agency of Taiwan, said Chief Superintendent Geary Barias, commander of the Philippines' anti-drug police unit. Tsai was convicted by the Kaoshiung District Court on charges of selling and using ketamine and sentenced to five years and 10 months in prison, Barias said. He jumped bail and fled to the neighboring Philippines in May 2005, where he resumed trafficking with an associate also wanted by Taiwanese authorities, Barias said. Tsai confessed to Philippine police that he earned nearly 5 million pesos (US$102,000) from selling ketamine in the country, Barias said.

Police capture suspected kidnap gang leader

MANILA, Philippines (AP)—Police captured the suspected leader of one of the Philippines' most notorious kidnap gangs, who allegedly masterminded at least 14 abductions over the last decade, an official said Thursday. Jessie Pepino, 35, was arrested Wednesday while swimming at a beach resort with his family in Bolinao town in northern Pangasinan province, regional police Chief Superintendent Leopolodo Bataoil said. Pepino was the leader and chief ransom negotiator for the group, which victimized mostly wealthy ethnic Chinese, Bataoil said. A 300,000 peso (US$6,100) reward had been offered for his arrest. The gang collected millions of pesos (tens of thousands of dollars) in ransoms for kidnappings from 1997 to 2006, Bataoil said. Police records show the group was linked to at least nine kidnappings last year.

Malaysian tugboat, crewmen detained for smuggling

SAN FERNANDO, Philippines (AP)—Philippine authorities have been holding a Malaysian tugboat and its seven Indonesian and five Malaysian crewmen for over three weeks for alleged oil smuggling, officials said Thursday. The tugboat MT Sungai Julan 1 was caught illegally unloading oil at the Poro Point special economic zone in San Fernando town, 230 kilometers (145 miles) northwest of Manila, said regional customs chief Edward Baltazar. Baltazar said he issued an order for the tugboat's seizure and detention after security personnel caught the boat's crewmen in the act of siphoning oil from the tugboat to a tanker truck parked along the pier on Jan 1. Since then, the vessel has been detained at the port and its 12 crewmen prevented from leaving the craft. The tugboat was carrying more than 77,000 liters of what is believed to be marine diesel oil worth at least 2.7 million pesos (U.S.$55,248), but it was not clear how much of the oil had already been unloaded, he said.

PINOYSTYLE

Gretchen Barretto

Yes, Bong Revilla has teenage son with another woman

By DOLLY ANNE CARVAJAL
INQUIRER

After her row with Dawn Zulueta, Gretchen Barretto is in the headlines again because of her tiff with Lani Mercado. That's La Greta's style of welcoming 2007 with a bang. Whatever she says, does or wears makes news. She has that *jé ne sais quoi* factor. Without her meaning to, everybody puts meaning to her moves.

Why was Greta irked? Lani said she wished Greta and Tony Boy Cojuangco would marry. Perhaps Lani meant well, but it's still a touchy matter for Greta. To get back at Lani, it seems, Greta insinuated that Bong had a kid with another woman. An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth. Glaring eyes and sharp teeth!

Bong and Lani must forgive me. I just want to show that Lani is an ideal wife and Bong is admirable for being honest about his dishonesty. He has a teenage son, Luigi, with my friend L.G. Three years ago, he told me that he finally told Lani.

Lani met Bong's son in Bora when they happened to be on vacation there at the same time. Bong was so relieved that Lani embraced the truth and didn't love him less.

It happens to the best of families. My own dad has love children. What's important is we are good parents, whether our kids are legit or not.

It's not my intention to cause trouble. I could have written about this a long time ago but I didn't, out of respect for Bong and Lani. Now that the cat's out of the bag, I feel it's time that Bong and Lani admitted it for their own peace of mind.

I don't mean to rock the boat. I just feel that after Gretchen spilled the beans on Bong, he ought to speak up now. The ball is in his court. Knowing him, he's got the balls to stand up for his kids—legit or not.

Milking cow

Guess who this TV host/actress is? She thought she married a good man. Now she's finding out he's really good ... at taking her money. They now sleep in separate rooms. She's pissed that, after buying him a luxury car, he wants a newer model! Shouldn't that be immaterial to a material girl like her?

Show biz game

Mariel Rodriguez just shrugs off rumors that she and her "Wowowee" co-host Janelle Jamer are not getting along well off-cam. "I don't know where they got the idea na nagplaplastikan lang kami ni Janelle sa show. We both find it funny and weird," Mariel sighs.

Oh well ... just like in their noontime show, they gotta know how to play the many games of show biz where everybody is fair game.

Surprise

Ogie Alcasid promises to clear up all speculations about him by June. I teased him. "Why June? Does it have something to do with a bride?" He laughs. "Basta surprise na lang." Will it be a pleasant surprise or more of a shocker?

Homeless heart

Birthday girl Toni Gonzaga just moved to her new house in Taytay. But her heart still hasn't found its home. "I'm not rushing things. I never plan my love life. It will just come. Besides, I don't need a guy to inspire me. There are many other worthwhile sources for that."

What if Luis Manzano and Sam Milby both ask her out on V-day? Who would she rather go with? "Whoever asks first." First come, first serve, huh? Love all you can. No sharing and leftover feelings allowed.

Dad's mark

Heard this cute anecdote about Mark Herras and his dad. Mark was hanging out in his fave Internet café when his dad dropped by to give him some money. Mark made lambing for P500 more. To think he earns millions, but he doesn't usually carry that much cash. Perhaps it's his dad's way of disciplining him so his hard-earned money doesn't go to waste. Better not spend it all in one place or on one pretty face, Mark!

ABS-CBN shows: Hello, goodbye!

Changes are brewing in ABS-CBN 2, according to sources. Specifically, old shows are ending to make way for new programs.

This was confirmed by Maloli K. Espinosa, vice president for Government, Corporate Affairs and PR.

Among the shows that are concluding their runs are the prime time game show "Deal or No Deal" and the fantaserye "Super Inggo."

Espinosa clarified that these shows were not cancelled, that the termination was due to the fact that these shows have reached the end of its "usual life cycle."

She reiterated that "Super Inggo" and "Deal or No Deal" have gone beyond the regular 13-week run of most ABS-CBN canned programs. "These shows have been extended already. But they will soon end to free time slots for new programs like the soap opera 'Maria Flordeluna,' the action-adventure 'Rounin' and the second season of the reality competition 'Pinoy Big Brother.'"

Big debt

Got this frantic text from the business partner of Hubert Navarro who co-produced the 24th Luna awards (Film Academy of the Philippines) '06: "Up to now, 8 Elephant Productions hasn't paid us. We shelled out 3M. They promised R.O.I. by Nov plus 50% profit. That's 4.5M total. All their checks bounced."

Until press time, I tried to reach 8 Elephant but got no reply. Is their debt really as enormous as an elephant?

Sounds like 'putik'

By NINI VALERA
INQUIRER

It shouldn't take a lip reader to figure out the four-letter word that "Starstruck" contestant Jesi Corcuera uttered when her name was called as one of the reality talent show's survivors on Sunday.

"Fortunately, there was no audio, and she raised her arm, which covered her mouth as she said the word. So we couldn't tell [for sure] if [it was] a [cussword] or a derivative of it," said Janine Nacar, production manager of "Starstruck The Next Level."

"It could have been 'putik,'" Nacar added.

Corcuera, 16, was at the bottom list of the survivors last week, having been voted off by seven of the contestants for being incorrigible and "not trying her best."

Text votes from the viewers of the popular talent search aired on GMA 7 saved Corcuera, a self-confessed lesbian, from being eliminated.

On the other hand, the lack of text votes from the audience ended the dream of stardom for Hazel Uy and Dex Quindoza.

The two received the lowest number of text votes and were booted out of the show on Sunday.

Uy, 19, a student of the University of San Carlos in Cebu, told Inquirer Entertainment, "From the start, I just left everything to God. I prayed that I might have a chance, but it was really up to Him."

Uy, a church choir member, is the best singer in this batch (it is the fourth year of "Starstruck"). She is also a former contestant of Miss Teen Philippines.

Devastated

Quindoza, devastated, cried backstage.

The second year student of the Philippine Maritime Institute told Inquirer earlier that competing in the search had changed his home life drastically.

"My father was a womanizer, and the atmosphere in our house was very tense," he said. "Everything changed when I made it to 'Starstruck.' My family became united, and my father became very supportive of me."

Quindoza believed he had what it took to win because he could "do a lot of things."

He said, "I can sing, I can dance, I can act. I can do all of them at the same time and I get better everyday."

Quindoza and Rich Asuncion were given the Best Kiss Award from the Kiss Flick episodes, part of the acting test last week.

First kiss

Asuncion, 17, said it was her very first kiss. Director Rico Gutierrez believed her, announcing on national television that everybody actually claimed to have never been kissed.

"But I only believe Rich," Gutierrez said.

Named Best Actor was Paulo Avelino, whom critics Butch Francisco and Floy Quintos described as a natural and instinctive actor.

Stef Prescott received the Best Actor award for her role in the comedy episode, "Bestpren."

Katrina Halili: Do you think I'm sexy?

By NINI VALERA
INQUIRER

Katrina Halili insists she has no sex appeal.

"Even when I was younger, I didn't have any suitors," she tells Inquirer Entertainment. "Until now, men do not court me."

Katrina, 20, feels her sexy image has alienated her.

"I don't see anything wrong with being sexy," she says. "[Though] I don't go all the way naked when I do magazine pictorials. I wouldn't do anything to hurt myself."

Katrina has gone on the cover of FHM twice and was calendar girl for the men's magazine last year. She has also made its 100 Sexiest list three times, coming in at No. 8 in 2004, No. 14 in 2005 and topping it last year.

She never planned on a sexy image, Katrina says. "I never dreamed of being an actress ... or of joining 'Starstruck' in the first place. A roving crew just spotted me. I was reluctant at first, but they kept asking me, [until] I agreed."

She simply takes what comes her way, Katrina, a regular on GMA 7's "Atlantika," says. "If I no longer enjoy what I do, I'll stop. If no more [offers] come, I won't even look."

Katrina Halili

Graduates of 'Nakuha sa Tiyaga' school of acting

By NESTOR TORRE
INQUIRER

Since acting careers here are often launched on the basis of good looks alone, stars' early performances are wooden, awkward, embarrassing and amateurish. Thank goodness, after some years and many roles, most inept stars finally learn the ropes and get their act together. Some of them even end up winning awards!

Call this local show business' "NST" ("Nakuha Sa Tiyaga") school of acting. This particular "school" has many stellar graduates, many of whom are still active today, continuing to enhance the TV-film scene with their now vastly improved performances.

A director of one of Eddie Garcia's earliest movies recalls that the military man-turned-actor was initially clueless in his portrayal, and had to be closely directed so he could pass muster.

Well, Eddie turned out to be an eager student of the thespic art, and soon won awards—not only for acting, but eventually also for directing. In fact, he's one of the movie industry's double Hall of Famers.

Sharon Cuneta was cute and bubbly in her first movies, but she was regarded as a clueless actress.

Already in his 80s, Eddie is still acting in one TV or film project after another—proof positive that lessons learned well can last a long lifetime.

Dina Bonnevie's own screen debut in "Katorse" was similarly dodgy. She was a bit too old for the role, and its sexy demands must have thrown her off, because her performance was skittish and uncomfortable.

Flashforward a number of years, and Dina is now regarded as one of the industry's best actresses. Attracted by her beauty and verve, some of the country's most acclaimed filmmakers have cast her in their movies.

Amy Austria is another actress who has transformed herself, from sexy starlet to much-awarded actress. Lorna Tolentino, Elizabeth Oropesa and Jaclyn Jose also had their start in sexy movies, but are now screen thespians of note.

Wising up

Even Miss Universe Gloria Diaz was awkward in her star-making vehicle "Ang Pinakamagandang Hayop sa Balat ng Lupa," where she came off as a better equestrienne than actress! But, Gloria has wised up through the years, and is a busy and admired thespian in maturity.

Phillip Salvador was an unheralded supporting player in action flicks and could have stayed at the undistinguished level, had Lino Brocka not made him his protégé and cast him in challenging films like "Jaguar" and "Bona."

Tetchie Agbayani was another sexy starlet who graduated to much better roles and projects. Her way up and out was the theater, where she impressed viewers with her on-target performance in a demanding two-character play.

After proving so convincingly that she could really act, Tetchie was cast in significant screen roles in films like "Kamakalawa," and was even tapped to play the plum dramatic role of Sisa in the TV serialization of Rizal's "Noli Me Tangere," directed by the Eddie Romero.

Sharon Cuneta was cute and bubbly in her first movies, but she was regarded as a clueless actress. Even in her big dramatic showcase, "Pasan Ko Ang Daigdig," her performance was deemed insufficient.

In the past decade, however, the now more mature Sharon has come into her own as an actress, by challenging herself with gritty and un-cute roles in movies like "Madrasta" and "Crying Ladies."

Finally, the Superstar herself, Nora Aunor, was awkward in her first screen appearances, and started winning awards only much later.

But, it may not have been Nora's fault. She was so phenomenally popular that producers cast her in one quickie after another, and she had no time to refine her performances.

In fact, Nora recalls that, in one two-month period, she acted in five movies—all set in the same house! That's no way to grow as an actress, that's for sure.

Later however, Nora decided to give her acting talent the care and feeding it deserved, and astounded viewers with her superlative portrayals in "Bona," "Himala," "Fe, Esperanza, Caridad" and "Ina Ka ng Anak Mo."

Nakuha sa tiyaga, talaga!

ZsaZsa, girls bond in Land Down Under

ZsaZsa Padilla

Singer-actress Zsazsa Padilla treated the most important women in her life—her mom Kating and three daughters Karylle, Nicole and Zia—to an Australian holiday last month.

The trip was primarily a "school-hunting" expedition. Zsazsa is sending Nicole to college there this July. "We checked out universities in Melbourne and Sydney," Zsazsa reports.

Between campus tours, Zsazsa and the all-gal gang had a blast in the Land Down Under.

They watched Kylie Minogue's comeback concert, visited the Melbourne Zoo and partied at the Hard Rock Café. But, girls being girls, they also hit the malls for some serious shopping.

"How time flies," ZsaZsa sighs. "Nicole will soon be off to college."

Thus, the working mom is making sure she spends quality time with her daughters.

The bonding has continued, now that they're back home.

"I personally bring my girls to school now," Zsazsa says. "I've also made new rules and come up with new routines that allow us to be together more often." ***(Bayani San Diego Jr.)***

Almost lost in translation at Il Divo concert

By POCHOLO CONCEPCION
INQUIRER

The saints would have turned green with envy.

As the operatic-pop vocal quartet Il Divo was winding down its one-night-only performance last Saturday at the Philippine International Convention Center, several women from the audience walked up the stage and began touching and kissing the hands and face of each singer. There the women lingered, beholding the objects of their adulation as though praying for some impossible favor.

People in the balcony section snickered at the bizarre sight. Or maybe they were envious. After all, everyone had been won over by the boy band with classically trained vocalists.

Handsome chaps

Actually, the members of Il Divo may not approximate the average age of yesterday's boy bands. Carlos Marin, the Spanish baritone who delivers most of the high notes, could pass for a fortysomething, hefty Julio Iglesias. David Miller, the American tenor, could be mistaken for a hard-nosed rugby player. No doubt, these guys are so darn handsome, and sleek-looking, that Pavarotti and his ilk might consider a makeover.

But are they good?

How good, really, is Il Divo, a group that has ridden high on a crossover trend—pop songs with elements of classical music?

The classical music buff would certainly balk at the sight of the quartet using microphones—a no-no in opera singing, as it could be a sign of the performer's inability to project his voice all the way to the back rows. Or an attempt to cover up vocal and tonal deficiencies.

Apparently, Il Divo is out to break the rules. Whether or not it dishes out the kind of "authentic" opera that would please critics might be beside the point. The most exciting thing the group has achieved, two years after breaking out with a debut album that hit the top of both the US and European charts, is its ability to surprise with a repertoire that includes rock—in four languages.

Feel-good groove

At the PICC gig, the groove felt good with Electric Light Orchestra's "Night in White Satin" and, even if it got too maudlin, Harry Nilsson's "Without You." Yet there was an uneasy feeling in Eric Carmen's "All By Myself": the sound of four voices bellowing full-blast diminished the desolate mood of the original version.

On stage left, a Caucasian violinist led the Manila Philharmonic Orchestra in providing the music's symphonic parts. On stage right, a five-member band including Il Divo's musical director-drummer whipped out the rock beats. On a few occasions, the guitarist was tempted to crank it up like he was in a metal band.

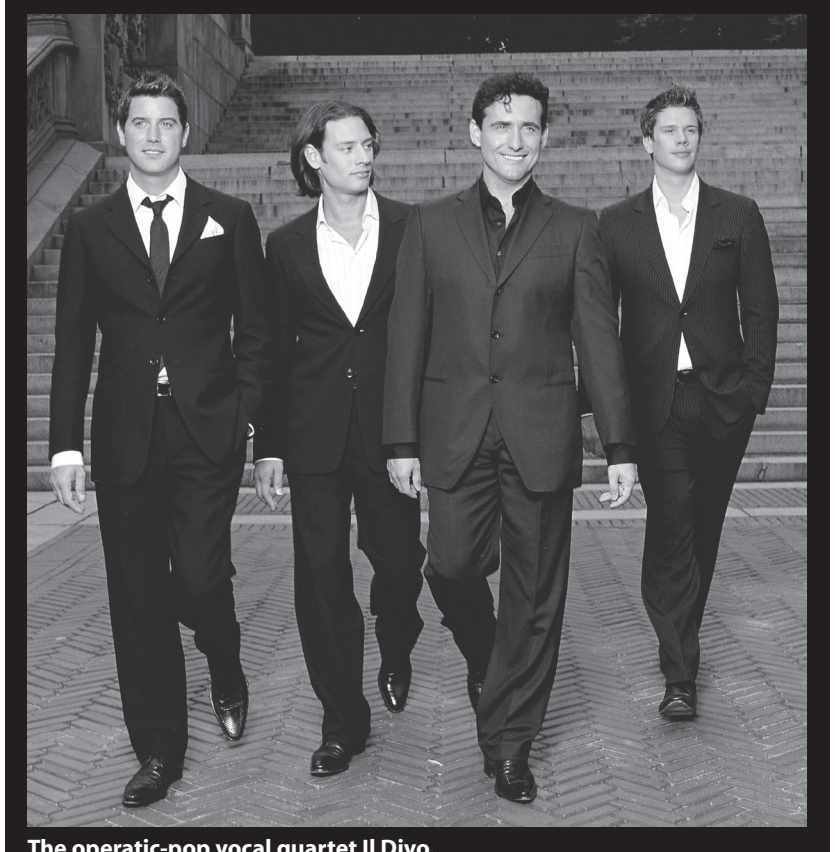
In an interview with Il Divo members Marin and Sebastian Izambard at the Makati Shangri-La Hotel four hours before the concert, they admitted having difficulty with singing covers because, they said, they feel they have to sound better than the originals.

"Siempre" (Sony-BMG), the group's latest CD, contains originals although it's yet to be seen if, and how much, these will be appreciated.

Unabashed devotees

What was clear at the PICC gig was the crowd's ecstatic response to English/Spanish/French/Italian renditions of "Unchained Melody" "My Way" ... and "Somewhere," the number that turned an otherwise snooty set of matrons into an unabashed bunch of Il Divo devotees.

Frankly, Il Divo in concert can be predictable: A lone voice (usually Izambard, the youngest-looking and most adored member) does the first part, and then the other three join in before reaching a climactic, full-throttle finish. If you don't speak a word of Spanish or Italian, you'll be lost in translation.



The operatic-pop vocal quartet Il Divo.

OPINYON

Opposition

There's The Rub
By CONRADO DE QUIROS
PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

That was a very nice picture that appeared on our front page last Saturday, during the sixth anniversary of Edsa People Power II. It featured Patsy Abad today and (in the inset) yesterday, or specifically six years ago. Patsy is the daughter of Butch and Dina Abad. The inset shows her as a kid during the inauguration of Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo: She is standing on the stage beside Arroyo, holding a Bible. Everybody else, including Arroyo, has their hands on their hearts, vowing eternal fealty to God, country and People Power.

The picture in the foreground shows Abad as she is now. She is 17 and has grown much, much bigger, and certainly much, much taller, than Arroyo who dwarfed her in the earlier picture. But she has grown in more ways than one. She is no longer at the Edsa Shrine, she is at University of the Philippines in Diliman, marching in front of its Hall of Shame. And she is no longer holding the Bible, she is holding a placard that says "Itakwil ang mga taksil sa diwa ng Edsa 2!" (Down with the betrayers of the spirit of Edsa II!) A reference to the person beside her six years ago, the person who went on to trash People Power. Holding the Bible and holding that placard have one thing in common: It's holding on to the truth.

The significance of that picture to me—quite apart from the fact that there's hope for this country yet, particularly to come from the young—is that it encapsulates the essence of a word that has been bandied about in this country, without people stopping to wonder what it means. That word is "opposition." What does opposition, or more formidably, Opposition with a capital "O," really mean?

Well, it means many things to many people. But there is really only one true or real opposition, or Opposition, in this country, one that is sanctioned by history. That—as Patsy Abad articulates with the dazzling simplicity of the uncluttered mind—is opposing the beneficiary of Edsa II for betraying Edsa II.

I say this in light of the growing debate about an emerging "Third Force," which Erap's people who have set themselves up as the "Opposition," namely the characters in UNO, seem unhappy about. I myself am unhappy about it only in that it calls itself "the Third Force." You talk of "Third Force" and you conjure images of Rogelio de la Rosa and Raul Manglapus and all the other candidates that rose to challenge the Liberal Party and Nacionalista Party candidates before martial law, and who—unlike Bernardo Carpio who managed to push back the two mountains that were trying to crush him—were cut to pieces ere they began. You talk of Third Force, and you talk of token, or "saling pusa," or, as that Bicol word puts it so well with all its connotations of nuisance, "sawong-sawong."

You talk of "Third Force" and you grant that there is already an Opposition in this country represented by the people associated with Joseph Estrada. I know Estrada has the financial resources, but he does not have the moral one. Indeed, the vastness of the first is matched only by the paucity of the second. That is not an opposition, that is a restoration. That is not a step forward, that is a step backward.

In fact, they are the one and only reason an Edsa III or People Power III has not taken off in this country, notwithstanding that everyone knows that Arroyo conspired with that snake, Garci, to steal the apple from Eden; or completely secularly and viciously, to kidnap a public school teacher-cum-poll watcher who wanted to testify on the cheating. People Power requires as its most essential element the contention of Good and Evil, the undiluted venom of the Evil matched only by the pure magnificence of the Good. The Evil sparking outrage in the mind, and the Good, or the glimpse of it, driving people out into the streets.

You have Evil, however unparalleled, without Good, however dimly espied, and you produce only cynicism. You have a people burning in anger but unable, or unwilling, to do a thing about it. Which is what we have now. Which is why despite survey after survey showing that Arroyo is the most detested person in this country, we have spectacle after spectacle of attempts to rouse the citizens falling on deaf ears. There is no Good flailing unceasingly at people, enough to tear them away from the siren's call of the NBA and storm the gates of Hell, or Malacañang.

What we need today is not a Third Force, what we need is a real Opposition. What we need is a force that rejects, refutes, or indeed, opposes, all that Arroyo stands for. What we need is a project that moves the country forward and not merely grinds it to a halt.

That, too, is why I am unhappy about the "Third Force" that is currently being forged by the Liberal Party, Nacionalista Party, Aksyon Demokratiko and other small political groups. I have no problem with its smallness: Great oaks come from small seeds. What I have a problem with is its identity. It is more defined by what it is not than by what it is. The "Third Force is not for Arroyo or for Estrada, it is not for the Administration or the Opposition. That is a location, that is not an affirmation. That is a geography, that is not an identity.

You want an identity, take it from Patsy Abad, take it from the desperate souls sending out their lamentations to the heavens from the pit of this land: Enough of the betrayers of the dreams of Edsa People Power II. Let their heads roll. It is opposing Arroyo not because she thwarted Estrada but because she thwarted People Power. Not because she cut short Estrada's term but because she cut People Power in the fullness of its flower. Not because she substituted herself for Estrada but because she substituted personal ambition for national aspiration, scraggly greed for epic heroism, boundless spite for boundless gratitude.

That is real Opposition. All the rest is just masturbation.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Parallel importation of drugs poses danger to public health

I wish to join the public debate on Senate Bill 2263 that seeks to allow the parallel importation of drugs, particularly from India. It is assumed that allowing parallel importation is risk-free and, at the same time, will reduce drug prices in the country.

The truth, however, is that both assumptions have not been proven true. Worse, the bill, if passed into law, might just prove the opposite. I am afraid that the bill might just expose the very people it aims to protect to more risks. The Filipino people deserve to be informed of those risks.

Sweet and simple slogans should not be used to cover up the risks inherent in the proposal. Legalizing the parallel importation of medicines by just any person could be potentially hazardous to public health. In a country with inadequate resources and regulatory controls, parallel importation could open up more opportunities for the insertion of counterfeit products into a complicated distribution chain involving several wholesalers and brokers—like what the Philippines has. It is often virtually impossible to tell with the naked eye the difference between real and fake medicines. In sum, the proposed law ma

In sum, the proposed law may surrender what is paramount—protection of public health—for what is populist. It sacrifices safety for affordability.

Dr. Alexander C. Cabungcal, MD
DLSMC, Dasmariñas, Cavite

Still hoping to be 'Valiant'

That was a great piece about Daisy Avellana in the Jan. 22 issue of the Inquirer. May I add my own personal item about her.

In 1941, when Daisy Hontiveros and Lamberto Avellana were newlyweds, the College of the Holy Spirit, or CHS (then known as Holy Ghost College), was designated by the archbishop to produce and direct the "Mission Play" for that year. CHS asked Lamberto to handle the project.

He asked Daisy to write the play, and Daisy wrote "And One Was Valiant." This was about a Tingguian princess who was converted to Christianity, but when the tribe heard about it, the tribal princess was asked to renounce her new religion. She wouldn't, so they stoned her to death.

The Avellana couple went to each of the high school classes at CHS to pick the girl who would play Li-ana. And I guess I was Tingguian enough to be chosen to play that role.

For two nights at the Ateneo de Manila University's Padre Faura auditorium, I was "stoned" to death, ending up lying on the floor with a lot of catsup.

Nobody, perhaps not even Daisy, remembers it now, but for over 50 years I have relived that role, hoping again and again that I may truly become "And One Was Valiant."

Eugenia Duran-Apostol
Mr. & Ms. editor and Inquirer founder

The oldest golf course

Looking Back
By AMBETH OCAMPO
PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

On a flight to Iloilo province recently, I was surprised to find former President Fidel V. Ramos in the economy section with me. Everyone wondered why Ramos was not upgraded to the business class section, which was half-full. Surely, he was more of a VIP or "VVIP" than the members of the fact-finding mission investigating the police siege of the Iloilo Capitol.

Ramos did not seem to mind. He carried his own bag, unlike the trying-hard VIPs with aides in dark glasses carrying their things. Ramos did not travel with security. He clowned around, and gamely posed for souvenir pictures. Passengers who saw him on a crummy aisle seat, two rows from the toilets, saw a man who was sure of himself, someone who by example demonstrated what true VIPs are like.

The sight of Citizen Ramos that day also showed me what it is like to be out of power. When this man was president, everyone crowded around him. Where are half of those people today?

Ramos traveled to Iloilo to play a round of golf in what has recently been acknowledged as the oldest existing golf course in the Philippines: the former Santa Barbara Golf and Country Club that has been known as the Iloilo Golf and Country Club since 1947.

Of course, there are other more famous clubs, like the Muni (short for Municipal) Golf course around Intramuros, Manila Golf (in Makati), Wack-Wack in Mandaluyong and, of course, the Baguio Country Club, which celebrated its centennial last year. All these clubs have golf courses that were set up after that in Iloilo.

It seems that in 1907, British engineers of the Philippine Railway Co. decided to play golf in Santa Barbara, a town about 15 km from Iloilo City. The American colonial government had planned a railway in Panay Island that would run from Iloilo to Capiz (now Roxas City), but what got established in the process was the golf course. One thread that requires further research is that Englishmen who worked in railroad construction in the Philippines were into golf. When Ramos told me that there was an old but underdeveloped golf course in Pangasinan, I wondered whether this could be linked to the construction of the Manila-Dagupan Railway.

The original course was a crude nine-hole field of about 2,000 yards close to the railway construction site. It is said that Scots were the first golfers there, and the other British railway engineers followed suit. We don't know their backgrounds but three of the founding members were John Grieve, G. Alexander and a certain E. Black, who helped design Wack-Wack. A club grew out of the golf course and, of course, this was exclusive to expats in the beginning, but by 1920, Filipinos were allowed to join the club. Some prominent members were Tomas Confesor and the Lopez brothers, Eugenio and Fernando.

This club was also the first Philippine-based golf club accepted as an affiliate of the Royal and Ancient Golf Club in Scotland which was established in 1754 and is now considered the mother of all golf clubs. And to further validate its position as the oldest golf club, they have managed to preserve some memorabilia like beat-up trophies, silver cups like one given out by General Motors in 1927 and six ancient golf balls found in the water hazard during dredging operations in 1980. Two of these are rubber "gutta percha" golf balls of unique design. One is a Spalding, and the other a Wright Ditson, but what makes a historian or archeologist swoon is one that is marked "Pat. April 11, [18]99."

I gave up golf many years ago because I could not wake up early enough to play a round with my parents, particularly my mother who played at dawn to avoid sunburn. Visiting this golf club made me reconsider a return to the driving range first and the golf course later so I can try and win some research money playing with FVR.

Filipinos are a sport-loving people and I wouldn't be surprised if there will be research to establish the beginnings of basketball, "sipa," badminton, swimming, or football. So far, golf already has its place in history and the next thing to do would be to find out if there were historical events that happened in particular golf courses. For example, there was the failed assassination attempt on Jose P. Laurel in Wack-Wack. Then there were historical people who played golf. How did they play? What was their handicap?

What about those who are remembered for playing badly? For example, I have never attempted to tee off in Baguio Country Club Hole No. 1, fearful of the spectators having breakfast or lunch at the verandah. How about incidents that can get you a prize for funny videos? A Japanese academic gifted me with an NHK video documentary on the Philippines, and from what I could make out of the pictures rather than the sound, it had something to do with Philippine society in the post-Ferdinand Marcos or the Cory Aquino period. The only part I enjoyed and understood was the part showing Fernando Zobel de Ayala doing a butterfly on film and having it recorded for posterity.

History, it seems, can be found in the most unlikely places. It may not always be about battles, massacres and the (mis)deeds of great men but also about the establishment of golf courses or even restaurants.

Comments are welcome at aocampo@ateneo.edu.

SAMU'T SARI

JACQUELINE HERNANDEZ

Children perform a gospel song number during the 1st El Shaddai International Catholic Charismatic Community Saipan and Tinian Chapter's one-night concert.

JACQUELINE HERNANDEZ

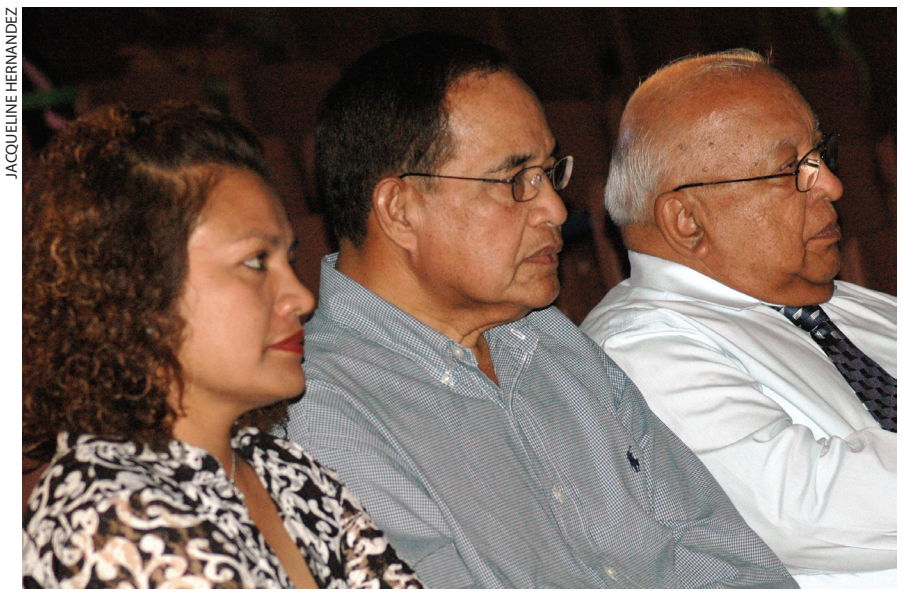
Sister Corazon San Gabriel performs a gospel song during the 1st El Shaddai International Catholic Charismatic Community Saipan and Tinian Chapter's one-night concert dubbed as "Experience the New Year 2007, A Cheer to New Life."

JACQUELINE HERNANDEZ

EL SHADDAI CONCERT

Art Macaspac, Ninie Bigalbal, Ellen Antiquin, Oscar Mojica, Rowena Velasco and Jaime Caranzo pose for a group photo during the 1st El Shaddai International Catholic Charismatic Community Saipan and Tinian Chapter's one-night concert dubbed "Experience the New Year 2007, A Cheer to New Life," at the Pedro L. Tenorio Multi-Purpose Center last Saturday, Jan 13.

JACQUELINE HERNANDEZ



First lady Josie Fitial joins her husband Gov. Benigno R. Fitial and Saipan Mayor Juan B. Tudela during the 1st El Shaddai International Catholic Charismatic Community Saipan and Tinian Chapter's one-night concert dubbed "Experience the New Year 2007, A Cheer to New Life," at the Pedro L. Tenorio Multi-Purpose Center last Saturday, Jan 13.

JACQUELINE HERNANDEZ

ALMA IN TRANSIT

Alma Pasaraba delivers her piece "Why Am I in Saipan" during the special preview performance of the Voices Of The Marianas production of "In Transit… stuck in an airport" which is directed by Barbara Sher at the American Memorial Park Visitors Center Theater last Saturday, Jan 13.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

MOVER CLEANUP

Filipino organization MOVER/FMI teams up with the Beautify CNMI! earlier this month as part of the group's January projects. They are joined here by Beautify CNMI! officials Rep. Cinta Kaipat and Angelo Villagomez.

Maharlika
PINOY LIFE IN THE MARIANAS

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